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SMITH VELMA T 05/05/82 081539 PRINTER: LI
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ORIGIN EUR-12
INFO OCT-00 ADS-00 EA-12 NEA-07 /031 R
DRAFTED BY EUR/SOV SOEX:JGJATRAS:GH
APPROVED BY EUR/SOV:RKGERMAN
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P 182015Z JUN 81 ZEX
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
INFO CSCE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
UNCLAS STATE 160346
E.O. 12065: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, UR
SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - JUNE 17, 1981
FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE, FOLLOWING ARE RELEVANT EXCERPTS FROM DEPARTMENTPRESS BRIEFING FOR JUNE 17. 1981. SPOKESMAN WAS DAVID PASSAGE.
Q. DAVID, THERE IS A PRESS REPORT THAT THE IRAQI PRIME MINISTER RAMADAN IS GOING TO MOSCOW. I WAS WONDERING WHETHER THERE WAS ANY CONCERN IN THE ADMINISTRATION THAT THE RECENT EVENTS IN THE REGION MIGHT DRIVE IRAQ BACK INTO MOSCOW'S ARMS, AND WHETHER THERE IS A POSSIBILITY OF CONCERN THAT IRAQ MIGHT NOW SEEK SOME SORT OF NUCLEAR CAPABILITY FROM THE SOVIET UNION IF FRANCE DOESN'T AGREE TO HELP REBUILD THIS NUCLEAR REACTOR.
A. I WOULDN'T BE IN A POSITION TO COMMENT ON THAT. THERE IS NOTHING THAT I COULD SAY TO THAT WHICH WOULD NOT BE
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PURELY SPECULATIVE.
Q. THE SAME REQUIREMENTS ABOUT DEFENSIVE AND OFFENSIVE USE OF AMERICAN-SUPPLIED MILITARY EQUIPMENT THAT WE'RE NOW TALKING ABOUT IN RELATION TO ISRAEL -- WOULD THAT SAME BE THE CASE AS REGARDS AMERICAN EQUIPMENT THAT MIGHT BE SOLD TO CHINA NOW? IS THE LAW THE SAME UNDER WHICH IT IS ALL SOLD?
A. I DON'T KNOW THE PRECISE ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION AND, GIVEN THE FACT THAT SECRETARY HAIG HAS ADDRESSED THE SUBJECT TO THE DEGREE THAT I AM EMPOWERED TO ADDRESS IT, I THINK I WOULD SIMPLY HAVE TO REFER YOU TO HIS WORDS YESTERDAY.
FOR YOUR INFORMATION, WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF PREPARING A TEXT OF THE SECRETARY'S PRESS CONFERENCE IN BEIJING. FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE INTERESTED IN IT BEFORE WE'RE ABLE TO PUT IT OUT IN A FORMAL FASHION, WE WILL BE GLAD TO MADE AVAILABLE TO YOU THE TELEGRAMMED TEXT WHICH WE RECEIVED FROM OUR EMBASSY IN BEIJING.
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY JL DATE 9/30/82
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☐ RELEASABLE☒
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

I REALLY CANNOT GO BEYOND WHAT HE SAID NOR COULD I REALLY EXPLAIN ANY QUESTION WHICH HAD TO DO WITH THAT WHILE HE IS OUT THERE.
Q. WELL, SINCE IT'S SUCH AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT AND YOU'RE SPENDING A GREAT DEAL OF OF ADMINISTRATION TIME ON IT. I'M JUST WONDERING IF YOU GO INTO A RELATIONSHIP THAT PERHAPS COULD DEVELOP INTO SOMETHING SIMILAR WITH ANOTHER

COUNTRY, THAT THE SAME IDEAS WOULD BE IN YOUR MIND IN A FRESH WAY. SO I WAS JUST WONDERING IF CHINESE USE OF AMERICAN EQUIPMENT AGAINST TAIWAN, SOVIET UNION, JAPAN, VIET-NAM -- WOULD THAT ALL BE DEFENSIVE, OFFENSIVE? HAS THE U.S. GONE INTO THESE QUESTIONS ON CHINA?
A. THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH AMERICAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT IS SOLD, IS LICENSED FOR SALE, IS UNDERSTOOD TO BE DEFENSIVE. I'M CONFIDENT THAT THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT IS AWARE OF OUR LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS AND, TO THE DEGREE THAT THERE IS ANY QUESTION IN THE MINDS OF THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT ABOUT WHAT OUR REQUIREMENTS ARE, I HAVE AN IDEA THAT WE PROBABLY HAVE EITHER DISCUSSED IT OR CLARIFIED IT FOR THEM. I DON'T THINK THAT THERE IS ANY DOUBT IN THE MINDS OF ANY COUNTRY TO WHOM WE SELL MILITARY EQUIPMENT ON WHAT THE REQUIREMENTS OF U.S. LEGISLATION ARE.
Q. JUST A SMALL POINT ON THAT SAME THING. WHEN WAS THE DECISION MADE ON THE SALE OF ARMS TO CHINA, THAT IT WOULD BEALLRIGHT?
A. WE NORMALLY DO NOT LIKE TO DISCUSS PARTICULARS LIKE TIMING, BUT LET ME ON BACKGROUND SAY THAT IT WAS IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE SECRETARY'S DEPARTURE. WHEN I SAY "IMMEDIATELY," I MEAN WITHIN HOURS.
Q. BUT THAT WAS WHEN THE FINAL DECISION CAME -- WITHIN HOURS.
A. YES.
Q. IN OTHER WORDS, WHEN THE SENIOR OFFICIAL BRIEFED ON CHINA, THAT WAS NOT KNOWN AT THE TIME.

A. NO, IT WAS NOT.
Q. WHEN WAS THE DECISION ON CIVILIAN TECHNOLOGY MADE?
A. WELL, I THINK AT THE SAME MEETING.
Q. OFF BACKGROUND --
A. YES.
Q. -- ON CHINA?
A. O.K.
Q. HAS THE SOVIET UNION LODGED AN OFFICIAL PROTEST? HAVE YOU RECEIVED ANY MISSIVE FROM MR. BREZHNEV OR ANY OTHER SOVIET OFFICIALS?
A. I REALLY WOULDN'T BE IN A POSITION TO DISCUSS THE

NATURE OF OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SOVIETS. DID YOU HAVE SOMETHING IN PARTICULAR IN MIND?
Q. DAVID, DID THE SECRETARY AND HIS PARTY IN PEKING YESTERDAY LAY TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON THE WORD "OFFENSIVE" OR "LETHAL WEAPONS"? BECAUSE IT'S MY UNDERSTANDING IN THIS BUILDING THAT THE GENERAL PURPOSE OF THE LIFTING OF THE BAN ON WEAPON SALES WAS COSMETIC AND DIPLOMATIC AND THAT WE HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO INTENTION OF SELLING THEM ANY OFFENSIVE WEAPONS AND THEY DON'T WANT TO BUY ANY.
A. THE SECRETARY SPOKE TO THAT AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE. I WOULD REFER YOU TO HIS WORDS; AND WE DO HAVE THE TEXT, AS I SAID.

ONE POINT, BECAUSE YOU RAI[illegible] I WOULD LIKE AN OPPORTUNITY TO CLARIFY. I'VE SEEN IN [illegible] NUMBER OF THE STORIES THAT CAME OUT OF THAT PRESS CONFERENCE USE OF THE WORD "OFFENSIVE." I HAVE GONE OVER THE SECRETARY'S WORDS VERY CAREFULLY. HE NEVER USED THE WORD "OFFENSIVE." HE NEVER SAID ANYTHING ABOUT SELLING OFFENSIVE WEAPONS. I WOULD SIMPLY REPEAT, AS A MATTER OF POLICY, THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT MAKES AVAILABLE MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO WOULD-BE PURCHASERS FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES AND THAT IS A PART OF THE LEGISLATION. "OFFENSIVE" WAS NEVER USED BY THE SECRETARY.
Q. CAN I ASK MY QUESTION BECAUSE THAT'S CONFUSED ME. IS THERE ANY ACTUAL WEAPON THAT WOULD BE CONSIDERED OFFENSIVE RATHER THAN SIMPLY LETHAL? THAT IS, ARE WE TALKING ABOUT TWO DIFFERENT OFFICIAL CATEGORIES OF THINGS OR DO YOU JUST OBJECT TO THE TERMINOLOGY?
A. WELL, SOME EQUIPMENT OBVIOUSLY CAN BE USED FOR BOTH DEFENSIVE PURPOSES AND OFFENSIVE PURPOSES. A TANK, AS AN EXAMPLE, CAN BE USED EITHER TO DEFEND YOUR HOME TERRITORY OR IT CAN BE USED ACROSS THE BORDER . HOWEVER, IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH U.S. MILITARY EQUIPMENT IS MADE AVAILABLE TO WOULD-BE PURCHASERS IS INTENDED TO BE FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES, NOT FOR OFFENSIVE PURPOSES.
Q. ALL RIGHT. WHEN WE SAY WE ARE SELLING A COUNTRY OR WE NOW WILLING TO SELL THEM OR CONSIDER SELLING THEM LETHAL WEAPONS, THERE IS NO OTHER CATEGORY THAT IS EXCLUDED BECAUSE IT'S OFFENSIVE.

DO YOU SEE WHAT I'M ASKING?
A. YES, I THINK I DO SEE WHAT YOU'RE ASKING; AND I THINK THE ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION IS "NO." I KNOW OF NO FURTHER CATEGORIZATION THAT IS GIVEN.
Q. DAVID, ALSO ON THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE,

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WHEN HE CALLED COMMUNISM AN ABNORMAL SYSTEM WITHOUT ANY FREEDOM, HAS THERE BEEN ANY OFFICIAL REPLY FROM THE SOVIET UNION AND DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAVE ANYTHING FURTHER TO SAY ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS ON THAT?

A. I HAVE NOTHING FURTHER TO ADD TO IT; IT SPEAKS FOR ITSELF. AS FAR AS I KNOW, THE SOVIETS HAVE NOT SAID ANYTHING ABOUT IT TO US.

Q. THANK YOU.

A. ONE LAST ONE?

Q. FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOMEONE MANAGING AMERICA'S FOREIGN POLICY, DOES A REMARD, SUCH AS THE PRESIDENT MADE YESTERDAY, SERVE ANY USEFUL PURPOSE?

I MEAN THE SOVIET UNION IS A VERY BELLICOSE ADVERSARY IN MANY RESPECTS, AND DOES A REMARK THAT IS AIMED AT THEIR SYSTEM MAKE IT AN EASIER TO CONDUCT FORFIGN POLICY WITH RESPECT TO THEM?

A. THE PRESIDENT WAS ASKED AT ONE POINT DURING HIS PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY ABOUT WHETHER THE UNITED STATES HAD A FOREIGN POLICY. THAT QUESTION WAS ASKED IN THE CONTEXT OF WHAT THE QUESTIONER POINTED OUT AS AN ABSENCE OF A

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MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY STATEMENT.

THE REPLY THAT YOU ARE ALLUDING TO ABOUT COMMUNISM AS A SYSTEM, BEING EITHER IN THE PROCESS OF COLLAPSE, AS SOME HAVE DESCRIBED IT, OR IN THE PROCESS OF CRACKING APART, AS OTHERS HAVE SAID -- WHILE NOT A DIRECT REPLY TO THE QUESTION ABOUT AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY, NONETHELESS I WOULD SAY HAS SERVED AS A USEFUL INDICATION OF THE VIEWS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES ABOUT THE PRINCIPAL TO THE DEGREE THAT ONE CAN DESCRIBE IT AS SUCH, FOREIGN ADVERSARY OF THE UNITED STATES.

I SAY THAT NOT IN A NATIONAL SENSE BUT IN A SYSTEMIC SENSE.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT TOWARDS COMMUNISM AS A SYSTEM, AS ENUNCIATED BY THE PRESIDENT YESTERDAY, IS PROBABLY ABOUT AS CLEAR A STATEMENT OF OUR OWN VIEW OF OUR POSITION IN THE WORLD VIS A VIS THE POSITION OF OUR PRINCIPAL ADVERSARY AS ONE CAN IMAGINE. STOESSEL

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